

**Talbot County Tourism Board**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, April 8, 2020**  
**8:30 a.m.**  
**Conference Call**

**I. Call to Order**

Chairperson Judy Bixler called the meeting to order at 8:39 a.m.

**Board Members Present:** Judy Bixler, Kelley Cox, Angela Eade, Harold Klinger, Jeff Schneider, Al Silverstein, Kim Weller, Cassandra Vanhooser

**Board Members Absent:** Ian Fleming, Laura Price, Mark Salter, Ben Simons

**Recording Secretary:** Candace Harris

**II. Approval of Minutes**

Minutes from the March meeting were presented. Harold Klinger moved that the minutes be accepted. Angela Eade seconded the motion, which passed by unanimous vote.

**III. Old Business**

**COVID-19 Response:** Ms. Vanhooser reported that the Emergency Operations Committee, of which she is a member, has been activated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The EOC in partnership with the Health Officer is coordinating the County's response. The business sector has been integrated into the EOC. Ms. Vanhooser hosts a twice-weekly call for the business community that addresses a variety of issues, including financial aid programs. Mr. Silverstein said that the Chamber of Commerce also has received many calls regarding the SBA/PPP programs, loans and grants available. All of the Talbot County information can be found at [talbotcovid19.org](http://talbotcovid19.org).

The department is also involved in two initiatives with the restaurant industry. Jordan Lloyd has started Family Meal for Talbot County where he will be offering a free meal for displaced hospitality workers each Monday. Talbot County sponsored this initiative. Chris Agharabi founded Feed the Front-MES to feed the front line workers. Both programs are being funded primarily by donations.

Ms. Weller asked Ms. Vanhooser if they could speak later about people who have shifted their business model because of the Covid-19 pandemic, i.e. Jamie Windon. Ms.

Vanhooser said that could be a topic for one of the business calls. Ms. Vanhooser said the good news stories are important, and she will send a follow-up email to ask who in your community are doing good things. One good news story is Easton Farmer's Market, which will open on April 25, 2020, at the Talbot County Business Center.

**2020 Talbot County Travel Guide:** One of the departmental projects affected by the COVID-19 pandemic is the 2020 Travel Guide. Ms. Vanhooser spoke with John Stefancik, publisher of *Chesapeake Bay Magazine*, and they have agreed to put the travel guide on hold, likely until 2021. Instead, Talbot County will be featured in an advertorial section in the magazine's June issue. They will also do something for the fall, possibly a mini-guide. People are still calling for information. We have enough 2019 guides left to last through the spring season.

**Staff changes:** Ms. Vanhooser reported that Sam Shoge resigned his position effective April 1 and is now the executive director of the Kent County Chamber of Commerce. Pam Keeton joined the staff as a content creator in economic development, though she will be doing some tourism-related projects. Many County employees are telecommuting because of COVID-19, though she and Candace continue to report to the office.

**Visitors Center:** Talbot County Visitor Center is currently closed to the public because of the COVID-19 crisis. Ms. Vanhooser noted that she is still examining options for running the Visitors Center with volunteers.

**National Scenic Byway Application:** The Eastern Shore tourism directors and heritage area directors are working with the State of Maryland to nominate the Chesapeake Country Scenic Byway for an All-American Road designation from the U.S. Department of Transportation. The application is due on May 15.

#### **IV. New Business**

**COVID-19 Recovery:** Ms. Vanhooser reported that she has restructured the departmental advertising plan. She is continuing basic digital advertising including AdWords and limited Facebook advertising, as well as the Maryland Co-ops that are already being printed. The messaging has shifted to "Stay home, stay healthy, we will still be here when this over." We have been planning with vendors on how to relaunch when businesses begin to reopen. Ms. Bixler reported that the State of Maryland is doing virtual tour videos of our state.

#### **V. Representatives from each of the towns reported on news and events taking place in their jurisdictions.**

**VI.** Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 9:41 am. The next Meeting will be held on May 13 at 8:30 a.m.